

Anthony Lamb. Philadelphia: Silvio A. Bedini. Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, Vol. 74, Part I. 1984. \$12.00.

The scant record of the "first professionally trained maker of scientific instruments in the American colonies" is here skillfully embellished with material about life in and around New York City between 1730 and 1784. There is some general discussion of eighteenth-century navigation and surveying instruments and seven of the eight surviving instruments made by Lamb are illustrated, but the major thrust of this work is a picture of the life of a colonial craftsman-merchant. Engravings, copies of ledgers, passenger lists, advertisements, handbills, etc., accompany a text tracing Lamb's career from apprenticeship in London, conviction for felony, transportation to Annapolis in 1724 at age 21, establishment of an instrument shop in New York, to his death, a respected merchant-craftsman and American patriot in 1784.

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FLIGHT PATTERNS: Trends of Aeronautical Development in the United States, 1918-1929. By Roger E. Bilstein. Athens: University of Georgia Press. 1983. \$18.50.

During the 1920s American aviation set the patterns clearly evident in future decades. By 1929, at the end of its pioneering era, aviation's impact on national security, commerce and industry, communication, geography, travel and international relations, activities reflected through succeeding decades, was responsible for transforming society from a two dimensional to a three dimensional world. Bilstein examines the cultural, economic and political ramifications of this new technology—along with the infra-structure necessary before aviation could establish itself as a valid transportation system.

Bilstein starts with the military and scheduled commercial operations, then examines the evolution of general aviation—such things as crop dusting, conducting photographic surveys and carrying executive personnel to distant appointments. The impact of Lindburgh's flight in launching a period of great and general acceptance of aviation is carefully noted, along with the role of government in providing a financial underpinning for an airline network as well as a regulatory and institutional framework.

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THOMAS ALVA EDISON: An American Myth. By Wyn Wachhorst. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press. 1981. \$8.95 (paper).

This pioneering study traces the evolution of Edison's image as an American culture hero from his earliest fame in the 1870s to his death in 1931—and beyond. Using both conventional and quantitative methods of analysis, Dr. Wachhorst arrives at some provocative conclusions about the underlying factors behind the shifting mirage of Edison's stupendous fame. The evolution of Edison's image from Promethean and even faintly satanic wizard to kindly homespun sage was part and parcel, Wachhorst argues, of a terrible leveling that substituted mass mediocrity for innovative striving as America moved away from the productive inner-directed values of the paleotechnic age into the consumption-obsessed inanity of neotechnic mass society with its mindless mass media. There is, of course, pregnant irony in the fact that these electronic media were so very largely Edison's handiwork and the source of his own sad cheapening and corruption as a would-be Barnum and over-exposed mega-celebrity. Wachhorst has produced an admirable and exhaustively researched work of scholarship, which is only occasionally marred by lapses into opaque, jargon-laden academic prose. His Edison book should be compulsory reading for all serious students of American Studies, even though it leaves the mystery of the genius behind the gargantuan myth as dauntingly elusive as ever.

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James Miller Lewis

WAR IN THE MODERN GREAT POWER SYSTEM, 1495-1975. By Jack S. Levy. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky. 1983. \$24.00.

Although historians may be uncomfortable with statistical models based upon five centuries of warfare, this book contains much valuable information about the concept of